

# PRESS RELEASE



County Council

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## County Council Announces \$130 Million Transportation Improvement Plan

Dave Gossett  
John Koster  
Gary Nelson  
Kirke Sievers  
Dave Somers

Stepping up to the leadership challenge, the county council has introduced a fast-track, \$130 million construction program to address critical road and pedestrian safety improvements in Snohomish County's most congested areas. Under the council's proposal, the work would be completed without raising taxes.

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"While \$130 million won't pay for all the county's almost \$500 million in unfunded transportation projects," said County Council Chair Dave Gossett, "it will help tremendously in bringing congestion relief and protecting neighborhood integrity in those areas where local roads have or will soon reach their ultimate capacity."

Ultimate capacity is a state Growth Management Act designation that would curtail local growth unless developers pay additional traffic impact fees or reduce the number of new vehicle trips associated with their projects. At the moment, only the 164<sup>th</sup> Street SE/SW corridor from Interstate 5 to the Mill Creek city limits is proposed for a declaration of ultimate capacity.

"There's not enough room to add more lanes to increase the capacity on 164<sup>th</sup>," said Councilman Dave Somers. "It's pretty well built out, but we must improve pedestrian safety and protect the quality of life in the surrounding neighborhoods."

Council Gary Nelson suggested that converting the center turn lane of the busy road into a reversible lane during morning and afternoon commute periods could reduce congestion. "The county needs to give that option a hard look," said Nelson. "It's much less expensive to change stoplights than add lanes."

The council's program would allocate about \$40 million to transportation and safety improvements in the 164<sup>th</sup> Street corridor. The remainder of the funding would be directed to transportation projects where other arterial roads are quickly approaching ultimate capacity status.

"We need to find new funding sources to jump start projects in heavily congested areas," said Councilman John Koster.

Koster said the \$130 million transportation program would be funded by dedicating a portion of the property taxes received annually from new construction – with no impact on existing taxpayers. Combined with the revenues from an anticipated future sale of valuable county-owned land in the Cathcart area, the county could sell construction bonds while rates remain low.

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The 164<sup>th</sup> Street corridor projects include walkways along Cascadian Way and Meadow Road, while North Road would be fully renovated (including sidewalks) from 164<sup>th</sup> Street south to SR-524 (Filbert Road). Additionally, heavily traveled Larch Way south of the Alderwood Mall would receive new walkways.

“Cascadian, Meadow and North roads all feed heavy traffic volumes to and from 164<sup>th</sup> Street,” said Gossett, “and residents along those roads deserve relief and safety improvements. Larch Road plays the same congested feeder role for SR-524.”

The county council will hold a public hearing on this proposal on Nov. 19, 2007, at the same time as they consider approving the 2008 county budget.

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